

## President Ronald Liebowitz Announces Plan to Step Down in 2015

*President Ron Liebowitz sent the following message in an email to the Middlebury College community on December 12, 2013:*

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students:

Today, the Middlebury Board of Trustees met for its December meeting in New York City. It was a significant meeting and I am taking the unusual step of sending this report immediately following our adjournment.

At the meeting I informed the board that I will be stepping down as president effective June 30, 2015, when my current five-year agreement expires and upon completing 11 years in office. It has been an honor of the highest order to serve as the 16th president of this remarkable institution and a gratifying and extraordinary experience, every day, for Jessica and for me.

I believe that announcing this news now, 18 months in advance, is essential in order to provide the board with the time necessary to select a search committee, to conduct a thoughtful search to identify the finest candidates, and, ultimately, to select Middlebury's next leader. With its dedicated and committed staff, superb faculty, and outstanding students, Middlebury has never been stronger or better positioned for the future, and it deserves the best possible presidential transition.

At the same time, this 18-month period allows me to help guide the institution through an important transition in its governance structure. Today, the board concluded an extended review of how it should structure itself to carry out its responsibilities most effectively in overseeing the entirety of the Middlebury enterprise. This includes not only the College that sits at its core but also the Language Schools, Schools Abroad, Bread Loaf School of English, School of the Environment, and Monterey Institute of International Studies, and their respective centers, programs, and initiatives.

Last year at this time, Board Chair Marna Whittington and I appointed a Governance Working Group to recommend changes to the board's structure that would position it to guide Middlebury in this time of great change in higher education. We had watched other institutions struggle with governance issues and we believed the time had come to address Middlebury's increasing complexity.

Our most recent reaccreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) in 2012 recognized this need and noted that "Middlebury's organizational structure has yet to catch up with the rapid rate of change in the institution." The report went on to say that we should develop "administrative and governance structures that reflect the College's varied programs and geographic reach."

The Governance Working Group, which was led by former Board Chair Frederick Fritz '68, designed an organizational framework that is forward-looking and adaptable to the changing needs of a dynamic institution. At the October meeting of the board, the group presented a **report** containing its recommendations. Today, the board accepted those recommendations and passed a set of bylaw changes that implement them effective July 1, 2014.

The most notable changes in the board structure include reducing the number of standing committees to six from the current fifteen. These new committees will assume broad responsibility for substantive issues that reach across all of Middlebury's entities. The new standing committees will be:

- Prudential (executive committee)
- Trusteeship and Governance
- Strategy
- Resources
- Risk Management
- New Programs

The Board of Trustees also voted to create three boards of overseers—one for the undergraduate College, one for the Monterey Institute, and one for the "Schools," which include the Language Schools, Bread Loaf School of English, the Schools Abroad, and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. These boards will focus, most importantly, on the educational offerings within their respective purviews. Each of these boards will include non-trustee members to provide a broad range of experiences and perspectives.

We have posted a **detailed description** of the new board structure.

The recommendations of the Governance Working Group will be vitally important to the future of Middlebury. On behalf of the institution, I convey our collective appreciation and deepest gratitude to this group for its work.

The coming years will be a time of change for Middlebury and for all of higher education. Institutions of our caliber must lead the way in designing creative and effective structures and educational programs that best meet the challenges of the 21st century. It is with this in mind that we will continue to pursue the ambitious agenda we have set for ourselves, not only to implement revisions to our governance and administrative structures but also to maintain the momentum we have established as an institution.

Finally, as we approach the end of the fall semester, Jessica and I wish you the very best for the New Year ahead.

Ron

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